

NEWHOUSE NEWS

15 March 1982

#475E (005)1

#PIKE COLUMN: SUGGESTED FOR WEDNESDAY USE

#BY OTIS PIKE

#NEWHOUSE NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON - THERE IS A FLURRY OF ACTIVITY IN WASHINGTON AIMED AT STOPPING LEAKS OF SENSITIVE AND DAMAGING GOVERNMENT INFORMATION.

PENDING LEGISLATION WOULD PROTECT THE NAMES OF CIA AGENTS. THE PENTAGON USES LIE DETECTORS IN TRYING TO FIND OUT WHO LEAKED THE COST OF A WEAPONS SYSTEM. LECTURES AT THE SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION EMPHASIZE HOW NAUGHTY IT IS TO TELL ANYONE THAT INVESTIGATORS WANTED TO PROSECUTE CITICORP OF NEW YORK BUT THEIR BOSSES KILLED THE CASE.

THERE ARE SO MANY LEAKED STORIES AT THE MOMENT THAT IT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO CONSIDER VARIOUS WAYS THAT SECRET INFORMATION BECOMES PUBLIC: WHAT IS DAMAGING; WHAT IS MERELY EMBARRASSING; WHAT IS DOWNRIGHT FUNNY AND WHEN A LEAK IS NOT A LEAK.

FROM THE HOUSE AND SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEES AND THEIR CONSERVATIVE PROTECTORS OF MILITARY SECRECY HAVE COME TWO LEAKS IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS - ONE SERIOUS; ONE NOT. BOTH LEAKS INVOLVED CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY BY RICHARD D. DELAVER, UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR RESEARCH AND PLANNING.

BEFORE THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE, DELAVER GAVE THE DATE WHEN THE NEW STEALTH BOMBER WILL BE OPERATIONAL. HE GAVE IT IN A PUBLIC SESSION. THE COMMITTEE TRIED TO COVER THE ERROR BY TAKING THE DATE OUT OF THE PUBLISHED RECORD. TOO LATE.

THE RUSSIANS NOW KNOW THE NEW STEALTH BOMBER IS SCHEDULED TO BE OPERATIONAL IN 1991, WHICH IS DAMAGING. THE OPPONENTS OF THE B-1 ALSO NOW KNOW THAT ITS REPLACEMENT - THE STEALTH - WILL BE READY BY 1991, WHICH IS HELPFUL TO OPPONENTS OF THE B-1.

TESTIFYING BEFORE THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE IN A CLOSED SESSION, DELAVER SAID THE RUSSIANS COULD HAVE A KILLER SATELLITE IN OPERATION NEXT YEAR, ABLE TO DESTROY OUR SPY SATELLITES. A VERY CONSERVATIVE, BUT NOT VERY SWIFT CONGRESSMAN, LATER READ DELAVER'S SECRET TESTIMONY IN AN OPEN SESSION.

THIS LATTER EPISODE IS NOT DAMAGING. FIRST, THERE IS MASSIVE SCIENTIFIC DISAGREEMENT WITH DELAVER'S PREDICTION. SECOND, THE IMPORTANT THING ISN'T WHAT WE PREDICT, OR EVEN THAT THE RUSSIANS KNOW WHAT WE PREDICT, BUT WHAT WE PROPOSE TO DO ABOUT IT. THIS THE RUSSIANS CANNOT KNOW, FOR WE CANNOT DECIDE.

THAT IS ONE WAY SECRETS GET OUT - SOMEBODY GOOFS. WHAT DO YOU DO WITH AN UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE OR A CONSERVATIVE CONGRESSMAN WHO LETS A SECRET OUT BY MISTAKE? ABSOLUTELY NOTHING; THAT'S WHAT YOU DO.

THESE ARE GOOD GUYS, AND IT WAS UNINTENTIONAL.